



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

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Lacks Creek Management Area Management Plan and Environmental Assessment (EA- AR-08-15) Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

Plan Consistency

Based on information in the Environmental Assessment (EA), the project record, and recommendations from Bureau of Land Management (BLM) specialists, BLM concludes that this decision is consistent with the Arcata Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (RMP/EIS), the Northwest Forest Plan, the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and other applicable Supplemental Authorities.

Finding of No Significant Impact

It is BLM's determination that this decision will not result in significant impacts to the quality of the human environment. Anticipated impacts are within the range of those addressed by the Arcata RMP/EIS. Thus, the Lacks Creek Management Area Management Plan does not constitute a major federal action having a significant effect on the human environment; therefore, an environmental impact statement is not necessary and will not be prepared. This conclusion is based on BLM's consideration of Council of Environmental Quality's (CEQ's) following criteria for significance (40 CFR §1508.27), regarding the context and intensity of the impacts described in the EA and based on my understanding of the project:

- 1) Impacts can be both beneficial and adverse and a significant effect may exist regardless of the perceived balance of effects.* No significant adverse impacts (site specific or cumulative) have been identified.
- 2) The degree of the impact on public health or safety.* No aspects of the project have been identified as having the potential to significantly and adversely impact public health or safety.
- 3) Unique characteristics of the geographic area.* The planning area contains two areas' of critical environmental concern and a stream segment suitable for wild and scenic river designation. The plan has been developed with the primary purpose of restoring and protecting the values that are associated with these designations, and will not adversely impact these values.
- 4) The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial effects.* No anticipated effects have been identified that are

scientifically controversial. As a factor for determining within the meaning of 40 C.F.R. § 1508.27(b)(4) whether or not to prepare a detailed environmental impact statement, “controversy” is not equated with “the existence of opposition to a use.” *The Northwest Environmental Defense Center v. Bonneville Power Administration*, 117 F.3d 1520, 1536 (9th Cir. 1997). “The term ‘highly controversial’ refers to instances in which ‘a substantial dispute exists as to the size, nature, or effect of the major federal action rather than the mere existence of opposition to a use.’” *Hells Canyon Preservation Council v. Jacoby*, 9 F.Supp.2d 1216, 1242 (D. Or. 1998).

5) *The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are likely to be highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.* The analysis does not show that this action would involve any unique or unknown risks.

6) *The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.* The decision does not set any precedents for future actions with potentially significant effects. The plan calls for restoration actions and recreation uses that have been implemented regularly in other parts of northwest California without significant adverse effects.

7) *Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.* No significant cumulative impacts have been identified. The project is consistent with the actions and impacts anticipated and analyzed under the Arcata RMP/EIS.

8) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect National Historic Register listed or eligible to be listed sites or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural or historical resources.* The project area does not include any sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places or sites known to be eligible. The plan calls for continued inventory and protection of cultural sites.

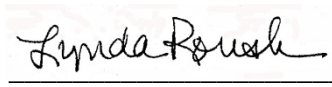
9) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect ESA listed species or critical habitat.* The management area contains habitat for two federally listed wildlife species (marbled murrelet (*Brachyramphus marmoratus*) and Northern spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis caurina*) and one candidate species – Pacific fisher (*Martes pennananti*). Consultation with the Fish and Wildlife Service for ESA listed wildlife species resulted in findings that the proposed plan may affect, and is likely to adversely affect northern spotted owls and marbled murrelets. The project may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect northern spotted owl critical habitat Unit 19 or marbled murrelet critical habitat unit CA-11-a. Implementation of the proposed plan will beneficially affect northern spotted owl and marbled murrelet critical habitat by enhancing and accelerating old-growth forest characteristics throughout the management area.

Adverse affects to these species may occur from forest treatments, prescribed burns, road decommissioning and trail construction located within 0.25 miles of suitable habitat. However, these activities will be conducted outside of murrelet and spotted owl breeding

seasons, which will minimize potential disturbances to both species. However, recreational uses on these trails are not seasonally restricted and such use could cause minor disturbances over approximately 1.02 miles of trail.

Three threatened fish species occur within the management area, Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*), coho salmon (*Oncorhynchus kisutch*), and steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*). Consultation with NOAA Fisheries has been completed through receipt of a Letter of Concurrence with a determination that the plan may affect but is not likely to adversely affect.

10) Whether the action threatens a violation of environmental protection law or requirements. There is no indication that this decision will result in actions that will threaten such a violation.



Lynda Roush
Field Manager
Arcata Field Office

9-30-2008
Date



United States Department of the Interior

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Lacks Creek Management Area Management Plan (EA-AR-08-15) Decision Record

1.0 Introduction and Background

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has prepared a plan and environmental assessment (EA) to identify management objectives and implementing actions for the Lacks Creek Management Area. This document is the Decision Record authorizing the implementation of the plan. Lacks Creek bisects the management area and is a tributary to Redwood Creek. The area is located in the northern Coast Range of California approximately 20 miles northeast of Eureka and 10 miles southeast of Orick. The management area includes 8,673 acres of BLM public lands.

The Arcata Resource Management Plan (RMP) (1992 as amended) identified the need to complete an area-specific plan for the Lacks Creek watershed because of the area's significant habitat values and restoration needs. This decision is the culmination of a comprehensive planning and environmental analysis effort that took approximately 18 months. Specific environmental analysis for many actions has been included within the EA. This ensured a coordinated analysis and will allow for direct implementation of those projects. Other projects, especially those scheduled later in the implementation process, will require additional "project planning" and environmental analysis (e. g. additional mountain bike trails) which will be tiered to the objectives within this plan.

The Lacks Creek planning and EA efforts are comprehensive in nature, and have evaluated existing planning and policy guidance and addressed issues within the area identified through agency, interagency, and public scoping efforts. The plan identifies desired future conditions (objectives) to be maintained or achieved, and management actions and public use limitations necessary to achieve these specific objectives. It addresses and integrates all existing management programs, including but not limited to: fire management, fisheries, vegetation and wildlife (including threatened and endangered species), cultural resources, scenic resources, recreation and visitor services, watershed management, and transportation.

2.0 Decision and Rationale

2.1 Alternatives Considered but not Selected

In addition to the proposed action (Alternative 1), the EA considered two additional alternatives. Alternative 2 still contained a focus of restoration, but included a more accelerated approach to implementing projects over a larger part of the landscape. This alternative also provided for a broader array and higher levels of public use and access while still retaining the overall restoration/protection focus. Alternative 3 - (No Action) provided for continued management following the guidelines identified in the 1992 Arcata RMP (as amended). This alternative represented a more limited approach to resource restoration, and also limited public access improvements.

Under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the decision record can incorporate components of any of the three alternatives. However, it is BLMs decision to carry forward Alternative 1 as discussed in section 2.2 below.

2.2 Decision and Rationale

2.2.1 Introduction and Rationale

Nine public comments were received on the preliminary plan and EA. Based on information in the EA, the project record, public input, and consultation among staff specialists, BLM has decided to implement the proposed action (Alternative 1) described in the EA with the changes described in section 2.2.2 below.

This plan will implement the goals of the Arcata RMP, enhance the values of the Redwood National Park Protection Zone, and restore habitat impacted by past uses for federally listed fish and wildlife species. The plan will also allow for dispersed recreation activities within close proximity to the Humboldt Bay area population. The objectives and actions outlined in the plan are not expected to adversely impact any resources beyond minor levels, and will provide an overall net benefit to the human environment.

2.2.2 Changes from the Preliminary Management Plan and EA

Vegetation Management (Including Forest Management)

Action Revised (Prairies): “DBH=12 inches” was replaced with “DBH of 16 inches or less” as one of several criteria guiding conifer removal in historic prairies.

Rationale: Discussions among BLM staff and with Redwood National Park staff (with background in prairie restoration within the Park) resulted in a conclusion that the provision for larger conifer removal in areas that were historically prairies would allow for actions that better meet plan restoration objectives.

Action added (Forest Management): If a specific project has the potential to have noise or other impacts on adjoining landowners, BLM will work with the landowner(s) and the contractor to minimize impacts (e.g. limit operating hours and days).

Rationale: Addresses public concern on preliminary plan.

Recreation and Transportation Management

Action added (Information/Interpretation/Education): Although trespass issues are not expected, BLM law enforcement rangers and other staff will work with adjoining landowners to correct issues if they develop in a specific area. Visitors will be informed that roads crossing private lands west of Lacks Creek are not open to public access. The only public access point is from Pine Ridge Road (off of Bair County Road).

Rationale: Addresses public concern on preliminary plan.

Locations Revised (Facility Development - reflected in map attached to this Decision Record):

Map Change 1: A campsite was moved from its location on the PP 1000 Road to a new site near Flyette Prairie.

Rationale: The new location offers administrative vehicle access for maintenance and fire suppression, and has water available for stock users.

Map Change 2: The map was updated to correct two equestrian use locations (One trailhead parking site along Pine Ridge was removed from the map because it is not feasible for trailer parking, while equestrian camping was added to a primitive campsite along Road LC 1000).

Rationale: Additional site inventory indicated that the changes represented more desirable locations based on plan objectives. Additional refinements in campsite locations may be completed during plan implementation as long as resource impacts are within the parameters analyzed in the EA and associated consultation under the ESA.

Map Change 3: The title “Backcountry Campsite” was changed to “Primitive Campsite”.

Rationale: The updated title better reflects that minimal facilities will be provided at these camping locations. Only those facilities necessary for resource protection will be provided (such as hitching rails and fire rings). However, no facilities for visitor convenience (i.e. picnic tables) are planned.

Clarification of Objectives: The following text was added below the Recreation and Transportation Management objectives: “Note: The intent of the above recreation benefit statements are to give plan readers a general understanding of the settings and management BLM will provide within the planning area, and are not intended to be all encompassing of the types of experiences that recreation visitors pursue when they access public lands.”

Rationale: Addresses public concern in the preliminary plan.

3.0 Consultation and Coordination The management area contains habitat for two federally listed wildlife species (marbled murrelet (*Brachyramphus marmoratus*) and Northern spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis caurina*) and one candidate species – Pacific fisher (*Martes pennananti*). Consultation with the Fish and Wildlife Service for ESA listed wildlife species resulted in findings that the proposed plan may affect, and is likely to adversely affect northern spotted owls and marbled murrelets. The project may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect northern spotted owl critical habitat Unit 19 or marbled murrelet critical habitat unit CA-11-a. Implementation of the proposed plan will beneficially affect northern spotted owl and marbled murrelet critical habitat by enhancing and accelerating old-growth forest characteristics throughout the management area.

Adverse affects to these species may occur from forest treatments, prescribed burns, road decommissioning and trail construction located within 0.25 miles of suitable habitat. However, these activities will be conducted outside of murrelet and spotted owl breeding seasons, which will minimize potential disturbances to both species. However, recreational uses on these trails are not seasonally restricted and such use could cause minor disturbances over approximately 1.02 miles of trail.

Three threatened fish species occur within the management area, Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*), coho salmon (*Oncorhynchus kisutch*), and (steelhead *Oncorhynchus mykiss*). Consultation with NOAA Fisheries has been completed through receipt of a Letter of Concurrence with a determination that the plan may affect but is not likely to adversely affect.

The BLM sent a letter offering to brief area tribal governments regarding the plan (Hoopa Valley Tribe, Blue Lake Rancheria and Yurok Tribe), but no responses were received. The BLM cooperates closely with tribes in the region and will continue to request input for cooperative implementation of plan actions. On August 5, 2008, BLM and Redwood National Park resources staffs met to discuss the preliminary management plan and cooperative implementation. The Redwood National Park staff recommended that both agencies cooperate in implementing adaptive restoration techniques within the watershed.

4.0 Public Involvement

An initial public scoping period was held from April 20 to June 9, 2007. A scoping meeting was held on May 16, 2007 and was attended by 23 members of the public. At this meeting, BLM presented preliminary concepts for management of the area based on an inventory of resources and the existing RMP direction. The BLM then requested input from the audience. Ten written comments were received from organizations and individuals during the scoping period. The scoping input received from the public meeting and written comments was used to identify issues and other topics for analysis in the preliminary plan and EA. The preliminary plan and EA were available for public comment from August 4 to September 9, 2008. Copies of the document were distributed to individuals and organizations who participated in the scoping process, to the Lacks Creek mailing list, and upon request. A news release resulted in several local papers and one local radio station running stories announcing the public comment period. A total of

nine comments were received. Five were from individuals, three from organizations, and one from a public agency.

Organizations and Agencies Represented:

California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection
International Mountain Bicycling Association
Bigfoot Mountain Bicycling Club
Backcountry Horsemen of California

Incorporation of Comments into Plan

The comments below and BLM responses represent an update to the analysis provided in the preliminary plan and EA, and are included as a part of the Decision Record. Any changes to the objectives and actions making up the decision are described in section 2.2.2 above. The full array of objectives and management actions that make up the final plan and Decision Record (including changes from the preliminary plan) are contained in Attachment 1.

Comments by topic area and/or section of plan:

The comments below are organized by the section or topic area of the preliminary plan and EA that they reference. The letters received during the public comment period were analyzed, and each specific concern or comment was assigned a number. For example, “Comment 6-C” means letter number 6, comment C. Although the letters are not reprinted here, they are available for inspection at the BLM Arcata Field Office during regular business hours.

Forest Management

- **Comment 6-C:** Concerned that noise from logging/firewood cutting will impact adjoining landowners.

Response: All firewood cutting and other vegetation treatments called for in the plan are located within the confines of the Lacks Creek drainage. Topographic barriers (specifically Beaver Ridge) are expected to block any sounds from travelling to residences within the main Redwood Creek drainage. The following wording has been added to Forest Management. “If a specific project has the potential to have noise or other impacts on adjoining landowners, BLM will work with the landowner(s) and the contractor to minimize impacts (e.g. limit operating hours and days).”

Vegetation Management

- **Comment 2-G:** The plan states that “Hunting would create demand for prairie maintenance” – BLM should not wait for hunting demand to complete maintenance. You should implement the action regardless of public demand. Also, BLM should cooperate with NPS, DFG, Hoopa and others to implement the actions.

Response: This statement is located in Section 4.8.1 in the vegetation impact analysis and was intended to indicate potential support of hunters for prairie maintenance. More accurate wording is: “Hunters would likely support prairie

maintenance activities”. Also, although discussion of specific cooperative implementation strategies with other agencies and tribes is outside the scope of this plan, BLM anticipates a high level of continued cooperative management with these entities to implement plan goals.

Fire Management

- **Comment 3-C:** The plan should soften the fire policy to allow natural fires to spread to practical containment lines (see response to comment 1-A below).
- **Comment 1-A:** BLM should use a full suppression strategy during the summer months (goal of keeping fires below 10 acres) and only use a fire management strategy (or implement prescribed burns) in the spring and fall months when rain is anticipated within 3-4 days. Use of a fire management strategy during summer months presents severe smoke/health risks and carbon emissions.

Response: As stated in Section 3.5.7, the Lacks Creek area will be under a full suppression policy, meaning all wildfires will be managed under a suppression strategy. Wildfires will be suppressed at the smallest acreage possible, provided public and firefighter safety can be met, and resource damage from suppression operations is not severe. Some wildfires may not be suppressed below ten acres if such suppression actions pose a threat to firefighter or public safety, or would incur greater damages to the natural resources than the fire behavior and fire effects. Burning out from roads, ridges, indirect fire lines, etc. may result in greater acreage burned, but may be safer, less damaging, and more cost effective. Determination of specific fire control tactics may be different for every wildfire and will be based upon current and expected weather, fire behavior, topography, fuels conditions, firefighter and public safety, cost effectiveness, firefighting resource availability, and local, regional, and national preparedness levels.

It is unclear what is meant by “a fire management strategy” in the above comment. The term “Fire Management” includes all aspects of wildland fire to include suppression, pre-suppression, prevention, education, mitigation, and fuels management. The area’s small size and proximity to private land does not allow for employment of a wildland fire use policy (allowing a naturally ignited fire to burn within a geographic area under specific weather and fire behavior conditions).

Prescribed burns will only be implemented under specific conditions where control, safety, and resource management objectives can be met without significant impacts to the public from smoke.

- **Comment 1-B:** The plan does not have forethought regarding access during catastrophic wildfire. Roads should be decommissioned so that they can remain accessible to 4-WD vehicles and for use as fire breaks.
- Response:** Access for fuels treatment and wildfire suppression were among the priority factors considered when determining the necessary road network to retain. The plan retains over 25 miles of road in the planning area. This will

allow heavy fire engine and crew carrier access to within 1 ¼ miles of any part of the Lacks Creek area. Roads slated for decommissioning have been impassable for several years, and are untenable for safe and effective use as fire breaks due to their mid-slope configuration and heavy fuels concentration. If fire line conditions are such that direct attack is not possible, the roads BLM plans to decommission would not be acceptable for burning out, access, or egress.

Recreation Management

- **Comment 7-A:** Plan appears to be biased towards non-motorized trails and should provide for more ATV access.
Response: Section 1.7 of the plan discusses the scope of this plan regarding ATV and other vehicle access as follows: “The vehicle access route into the acquired lands on the west side of Lacks Creek crosses private lands. A public use easement was not granted by the seller and use is only available for administrative purposes. Also, as a condition of the donation agreement, the newly acquired lands were to be designated closed to all public vehicle use. The BLM establishes off highway vehicle (OHV) designations for public lands through the RMP process. The OHV designations within the management area were established in the Arcata RMP (USDI BLM 1995) (see Affected Environment chapter).” As stated in section 1.2.2 “In 2006, the BLM received funding from the California Department of Parks and Recreation, Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division to inventory and assess which roads on the east side of Lacks Creek would continue to be accessible for motorized recreation uses and which spur roads would be re-opened and made vehicle accessible.” The newly named “Lacks Creek Road” and the Midslope Road were reopened to vehicle use. The plan also provides for recreation facilities such as campsites and trailhead parking in areas accessible by motorized vehicles (including ATVs) on open routes on the east side of Lacks Creek.
- **Comment 6-A:** Allow day-use only – overnight use will increase risk of wildfire and sanitation/litter issues. Remoteness of sites would make enforcement difficult.
Response: All of the overnight use sites proposed within the plan are in locations that have either public or BLM administrative vehicle access (for maintenance, law enforcement and fire access). The plan limits public overnight use to these designated sites to reduce the risk of wildfire and to focus use at specific locations where BLM can provide for litter removal and other maintenance. Also, BLM instates and enforces dry-season campfire restrictions each year (typically beginning in early summer through the first fall rains) when fuel moisture conditions indicate an increased wildfire risk.
- **Comment 6-B:** Public access improvements will increase trespass onto private property adjoining BLM land. Signing is not an effective solution.
Response: Signing is considered to be an effective method for directing uninformed visitors to public lands. It will be used in conjunction with other management actions (on site law enforcement, visitor information guides, etc.).

The trail system designed under the plan directs visitors on routes that do not lead towards private lands adjoining the area. The following text will be added to the Recreation and Transportation Management section under Information/Interpretation/Education: “Although trespass issues are not expected, BLM law enforcement rangers and other staff will work with adjoining landowners to correct issues if they develop in a specific area. Visitors will be informed that roads crossing private lands west of Lacks Creek are not open to public access. The only public access point is on Pine Ridge Road (off of Bair County Road).”

- **Comments 4-A, 5-A:** Select Alternative 2 for mountain biking trails (3.6.5). This keeps the option open for more trail development, but does not commit BLM to having to implement if further analysis does not support the additional trail.

Response: Alternative 1 was developed to provide a balance of resource restoration and wildlife habitat improvements while allowing for compatible recreation opportunities. As the commenter stated, construction of any additional miles of mountain bike trails within the management area (beyond those contained on the plan maps) will require further environmental analysis. The BLM feels that further analysis of an additional 10 miles of mountain bike specific trails is a reasonable amount to consider within the time horizon for this plan. If, upon implementation of the proposed trail network, it is determined that additional mileage can be added while meeting other management goals, this could be considered through a plan amendment with additional public involvement.

- **Comment 3-A:** Recreation development (both trails and campsites) is too extensive and will impact resource values of the area.

Response: All BLM managed public lands are normally open to dispersed camping except where sensitive resource values require limitations. The campsite locations identified for Lacks Creek are primarily designed to focus/limit overnight use and campfires to specific locations to minimize the possibility of wildfire and resource damage. They will not have a level of development (tables, grills, etc.) traditionally associated with campsites, but only minimal improvements needed for resource protection. For example, a fire ring with a sufficient area surrounding it cleared of vegetation, spring improvements, and hitching rails to prevent tree damage at equestrian sites. All of these sites are located on previously disturbed settings (log landings). The trailhead sites and road-accessible campsites will also be primitive with minimal facilities for resource protection and sanitation. Road segments identified for road to trail conversions have been selected to minimize potential impacts to critical wildlife habitat, and all but 1.5 miles of the initial trail network is proposed on previously constructed roads (up to 10 miles of mountain bike routes may be constructed with additional environmental analysis). The developments proposed under the plan are of a low-key rustic nature that is compatible with the goals of the Arcata RMP.

- **Comment 2-A:** The hunting objective is unclear – does it mean all hunters need to develop skills and abilities, or that this is an additional opportunity to be provided? Recreation benefits should be more clear, complete and concise.
Response: The following text will be added to the objectives to clarify their intent: “The intent of the above recreation benefit statements are to give plan readers a general understanding of the settings and management that BLM will provide within the planning area, and are not intended to encompass all types of experiences that recreation visitors pursue when they access public lands.”
- **Comment 2-F:** “Burning meadows would benefit hunters. . .” Should broaden this discussion of beneficial effects to all affected resources, not just hunters.
Response: This statement is in section 4.10.2 of the plan which is limited to a discussion of impacts specific to recreation users. Impacts to other resource values (both beneficial and adverse) are discussed in other parts of Chapter 4.
- **Comment 2-G:** Text says “Hunters would benefit from thinning and burning . . .” Reword to recognize general benefits of habitat management – also, analysis does not capture the complexity of hunting/habitat impacts which are actually more mixed and studies show that hunter satisfaction does not always correlate with site specific factors including harvest success.
Response: This statement is in section 4.10.2 of the plan which is limited to a discussion of impacts specific to recreation users. Impacts to other resource values (both beneficial and adverse) are discussed in other parts of Chapter 4. The BLM agrees with the commenter that the impacts to hunters depend on their perspective/interest/game pursued, and that harvest success is not the only indication of hunter satisfaction.

Law Enforcement

- **Comment 3-B:** No discussion about how illegal uses associated with increased public access will be managed (dumping, pot growing, etc.)
Response: The BLM will continue to provide a law enforcement presence in the planning area. Agency experience in managing other dispersed use areas has shown that illegal use typically decreases as areas become more popular for legitimate recreation activities.

Wildlife Management:

- **Comment 3-C:** Concerned with impacts of public use of prairies on elk reestablishment.
Response: Elk habitat is not confined to the prairies, and elk will use a variety of habitat types throughout the area. Elk management efforts in areas such as the King Range National Conservation Area, Sinkyone Wilderness State Park, and Redwood National and State Parks have shown that herds can be successfully managed in areas with trails and other dispersed public uses.
- **Comment 3-E:** Keep out non-native invasive turkeys.

Response: The BLM has not proposed any habitat improvements with the intent to increase turkey populations within the planning area. The California Fish and Game Commission and Department of Fish and Game manage wildlife populations within the state.

- **Comment 2-B:** Plan wording is incorrect – the Fish and Game Commission establishes hunting regulations and the Department of Fish and Game enforces the regulations. Also plan should more fully describe DFG role in area.

Response: The commenter is correct and this response serves to correct the record. The BLM cooperates regularly with DFG, and has consulted with their biologists during plan preparation. The BLM will continue to work with DFG and other agencies to cooperatively manage the area and implement the plan. A specific discussion of implementation strategies is beyond the scope of this plan.

- **Comment 2-C:** Probably not true that hunting at levels expected in the plan would cause additional disturbance to most wildlife (as stated in plan), nor would other recreation uses cause significant impacts to wildlife.

Response: The purpose of the impact analysis is to disclose and analyze all impacts. Hunting and other recreation uses within the management area will cause some disturbance to wildlife. However, as indicated by the “Finding of No Significant Impact” for this plan, these impacts are not expected to approach significant levels.

General:

- **Comment 1-A:** Agree with proposed action regarding provision of multiple use trail and equestrian opportunities.

Response: Thank you for your comment.

- **Comment 3-F:** The plan should have included separate alternatives for the higher recreation development/accelerated restoration efforts instead of combining them in Alternative 2.

Response: The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires BLM to analyze a reasonable range of alternatives in environmental documents. Alternative 2 was designed to present the more “intensive” end of this range for Lacks Creek, both in accommodating public use and implementing restoration. As stated in Section 3.1 of the plan, “The BLM has the discretion to select in an alternative in its entirety or to combine elements of the various alternatives presented in the preliminary plan/EA.” For example, BLM could select the more intensive management components for one resource or use and the less intensive aspects from another.

Additional Input from Public, Agencies, and Tribes

In addition to the input received during the formal comment process, BLM also

contacted over 20 organizations, agencies and individuals with expertise or interest in the Lacks Creek Management Area. A summary of contacts is provided in section 5.3 of the Preliminary Plan and EA.

5.0 Plan Consistency

Based on information in the EA, the project record, and recommendations from BLM specialists, BLM concludes that this decision is consistent with and serves to implement priority actions in the 1992 Arcata Resource Management Plan (RMP) as amended. Specifically, Section III "Management Actions" on page 2-25 calls for Preparation of a Lacks Creek watershed activity plan.

6.0 Administrative Remedies

Administrative remedies may be available to those who believe they will be adversely affected by this decision. Appeals may be made to the Office of Hearings and Appeals, Office of the Secretary, U.S. Department of Interior, Board of Land Appeals (Board) in strict compliance with the regulations in 43 CFR Part 4. Notices of appeal must be filed in this office within 30 days after publication of this decision. If a notice of appeal does not include a statement of reasons, such statement must be filed with this office and the Board within 30 days after the notice of appeal is filed. The notice of appeal and any statement of reasons, written arguments, or briefs must also be served upon the Regional Solicitor, Pacific Southwest Region, U.S. Department of Interior, 2800 Cottage Way, E-1712, Sacramento, CA 95825.

The effective date of this decision (and the date initiating the appeal period) will be the date this notice of decision is posted on BLM's (Arcata Field Office) internet website.



Lynda Roush
Field Manager,
Arcata Field Office

9-30-2008
Date

Attachment 1 –Plan Decisions

Below is a full listing of the management plan decisions including the updates from the preliminary plan as described in section 2.2.2 of the Decision Record. Any references to maps or appendices relate to those contained in the Preliminary Management Plan and Environmental Assessment, except for Map 3-2 (Recreation & Transportation) which has been updated and is referenced as Attachment 3.

Cultural Resources Management

Objectives: Conduct in-depth research on all aspects of past human use of the environment in this area. Compile a comprehensive record of all prehistoric and historic cultural resources known to exist within the Lacks Creek Management Area. Protect and interpret at-risk and/or particularly interesting cultural resources for the enhancement of visitor experiences.

Management Actions:

- Create a cultural context document for the Lacks Creek watershed that will synthesize, within a regional context, all available information on the prehistoric and historic uses of the landscape.
- Record/re-record cultural properties within the Lacks Creek Management Area.
- Develop a cultural resources management plan that will both protect and interpret significant historic properties.
- Coordinate with other programs to avoid negative impacts to cultural resources and allow for public appreciation of those resources.
- Create and deploy informative interpretive materials for the benefit of the visiting public, in the forms of signs, brochures, and web-based presentations.

Fisheries, Riparian and Water Quality Management

Objectives: The objectives for managing Lacks Creek include protection and restoration of watershed processes and habitat for native fish, fauna, and riparian-dependent species. Habitat conditions which will meet these goals are: 1) Summer water temperatures not regularly exceeding 68°F or at a Mean Weekly Average Temperature (MWAT) of 64°F or lower; 2) Riparian canopy cover over much of the stream to provide shade adequate for maintaining water temperatures low enough to support anadromous salmonids; 3) The composition of the riparian forests to include a significant component of larger conifer trees which provide not only shade but also provide areas of decreased water velocity, streamside stability during high streamflow events and function as future sources of large woody debris; 4) Approximately 50 percent of the habitat are pools at least one meter deep with abundant cover within fish-bearing portions of the stream; 5) Bank erosion limited to the outside bends of channel meanders with other occasional small-scale bank failures; and 6) Abundant, high-quality, stable spawning habitat for anadromous salmonids located at the tail of pools and in flatwater reaches.

Management Actions:

- Implement erosion control efforts (decommissioning and upgrading road segments) within a 15-year time period. Work will be conducted during dry conditions (usually June through October).
- Decrease the levels of future erosion by treating sediment sources therefore eliminating much of the road-related erosion (see Appendix A-1, Standard Operating Procedures for Fisheries, Riparian and Water Quality)
- Roads needed for administrative use will be upgraded so that the risk of future erosion and future maintenance requirements are minimized. Roads identified with no future use requirements will be decommissioned eliminating the potential for any significant erosion.
- Upgrade the following roads proposed for access to perform vegetation treatments and trail maintenance activities: FL 1000, PP1000, LC 1000, LC 1100, LC2000, BS1500, RP 1000 (portion uphill from the prairie), FP 1000, BO1600, PR 1100, and PR 1000 (see Map 3-2). The total length of roads identified for upgrading is 13.5 miles. Upgrades include actions such as replacing culverts which have potential for causing significant future erosion, improving road drainage to minimize water concentration, shaping and sloping roads to minimize future erosion potential, and adding surface materials as needed to prevent rutting and water concentration.
- Priority roads identified for decommissioning include RP1000, RP 1250, FL 1000, FL1025, FL1035, FL1030, PP 1000, PP 1110, PP 1105, RP 1000, RP1200, PP1110 FP 1000, FP1005, FP1015, BO1600, BO1610, BO 1665, and BO 1315. The total length of roads identified for decommissioning is 24.1 miles. Road decommissioning includes complete removal of culverts and/or “Humboldt crossings” at points where a road crosses a stream (stream crossings), removal of fill material from stream crossings and swales, de-compaction (also called “ripping”) of road surfaces, and pulling fill material from the outside edge of the road to outslope the former road bed. In addition, excavated woody material, brush, and other mulch materials will be placed on newly exposed bare soil surfaces to prevent surface erosion. If necessary, additional mulch materials such as weed-free straw may be used. A portion of the decommissioned roads will be converted to trails (see Recreation section).
- All other road segments not identified in this plan for upgrading or decommissioning and which pose a substantial risk of future erosion may also be upgraded or decommissioned. If potential impacts from this additional decommissioning are determined to be beyond the scope of the impact analysis for this plan, additional NEPA documentation and ESA Consultation will be completed at the appropriate level (see Maps 3-1 and 3-2).
- Road decommissioning and upgrading will be accomplished through use of heavy equipment such as excavators, bulldozers, and dump trucks. To the extent feasible, fill material will be stored adjacent to, or near treated areas. When such storage is not feasible, fill material will be transported to stable locations off-site and shaped such that the possibility of future erosion will be minimal.

- Continue working cooperatively with landowners in the Redwood Creek basin to prioritize treatment of erosion sources throughout the basin via the Redwood Creek Watershed Group.
- In cooperation with Redwood National and State Parks and DFG, monitor habitat conditions to measure summer water temperatures, and conduct stream surveys which include measurements of pool depth, riparian forest composition, bank erosion, and availability of spawning gravels.

Wildlife Management

Objective: Protect existing late successional forests which provides habitat for northern spotted owls, marbled murrelets, and Pacific fishers. Increase the availability of suitable nesting, roosting, and foraging habitat for northern spotted owls, nesting habitat for marbled murrelets, and denning, resting, and foraging habitat for Pacific fishers. Accelerate the development of old-growth forests of sufficient size to support four breeding pairs of northern spotted owls (over the long-term). Reclaim and maintain foraging habitat for elk and deer. Enhance and maintain suitable habitats for other wildlife species including; BLM sensitive species, migratory birds, raptors, bats, reptiles, amphibians and small mammals. Monitoring, surveys, and assessments are also incorporated.

Management Actions:

Northern Spotted Owl

- Conduct protocol surveys for northern spotted owls within suitable habitat on a project specific basis and periodic surveys throughout the management area to determine trends in owl activity center numbers, locations, and productivity.
- Monitor for barred owls.
- Expand and improve nesting, roosting, and foraging habitat by promoting late successional forest habitats sufficient to sustain four breeding pairs (see Forest Management Proposed Action - mechanical thinning).
- Conduct project level assessments, surveys, and Section 7 consultation with FWS as required.

Marbled Murrelet

- Conduct protocol surveys for marbled murrelets within suitable habitat on a project specific basis.
- Accelerate the development of late successional forest habitats on approximately 780 acres of previously harvested conifer forest habitat (see Forest Management Proposed Action - mechanical thinning).
- Conduct project level assessments, surveys, and Section 7 Consultation with FWS as required.

Pacific Fisher

- Conduct inventories for populations and delineate suitable habitat throughout the management area.

- Expand and improve fisher denning and resting habitat by promoting late successional forest habitats (see Forest Management Proposed Action – mechanical thinning).
- Increase denning and resting sites by leaving snags and down trees (see Forest Management Proposed Action).
- Enhance and maintain existing fisher habitat by implementing forest practices gradually, over the course of three to six years.
- Implement conservation objectives and recommended approaches from the West Coast Fisher Population Conservation Assessment and Strategy Plan once finalized.
- Conduct fisher research cooperatively with Tribal, State, and University partners.

Elk

- Monitor elk use within prairie and oak woodland habitats.
- Work cooperatively with Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, DFG, and other partners to enhance elk habitat.
- Increase elk foraging habitat through:
 - Prairie restoration (see Vegetation & Fire Proposed Action).
 - Oak woodland restoration (see Forest Management Proposed Action).

Other Wildlife Species or Special Habitat Features

- Conduct habitat assessments and surveys on a project specific basis to determine use by BLM sensitive or other native species or important habitat features (such as raptor nesting cliffs etc.) and determine protective measures necessary.
- Support efforts to reintroduce native species such as California Condor (*Gymnogyps californianus*) to the area, as long as such introductions are compatible with other management objectives in the plan.

Vegetation Management (including Forest Management)

Prairies

Objective: Actively maintain prairies at 2005 distribution levels, and at a Fire Regime Condition Class 1 (see Appendix B-2). Prevent additional loss of prairie cover type to conifer encroachment in order to maintain a mosaic of habitat types for plants and wildlife. Restore prairies to levels beyond 2005 inventoried distribution levels where evidence of recent encroachment of conifers (DBH of 16 inches or less) and presence of residual prairie species provide clear indicators of historic contiguous prairie. Maintain prairie type which represents a dominance of native perennial bunchgrasses and interstitial native herbs, with pockets of scattered and isolated white and black oaks within the prairie and along the periphery. The desired condition is that Douglas-fir/mixed-hardwood forest vegetation is absent to scarce within prairies.

Management Actions:

- Remove conifer, tanoak, and/or other forest vegetation encroachment within existing prairies (approximately 102 acres) through mechanical methods and

prescribed fire. Conduct immediate mechanical removal of conifers that are shading white or black oaks at the boundaries of prairies.

- Burn the prairies with vehicular access to them in the late fall to early spring on a rotation of 5-10 years to maintain openness and species diversity.
- Monitor and maintain scattered and isolated white and black oak pockets within the prairie community and along the periphery.
- Inventory young oaks and consider temporary protective barriers until trees attain a height resistant to wildlife or livestock grazing impacts if it is determined that there is a lack of oak recruitment.
- Grazing management on a project basis may be utilized as a tool to help maintain Faulkner, Sidehill, Pine Ridge, and Kit prairies. Livestock grazing on all other prairies will not be authorized due to deed restrictions. Project level grazing does not denote establishment of a BLM grazing allotment to allow for forage use. Rather it reflects an approach to livestock use as a tool to achieve a specific ecological objective/vegetation treatment such as turning out livestock during a narrow season of use to maximize beneficial effects to native perennial bunchgrasses and interstitial native herbs.
- Grazing management projects will be carefully controlled to prohibit livestock use/trespass into deed restricted areas (maintain gate closure on road access to Preston prairie) as well as to the Lacks Creek Management Area as a whole with the exception of desired project level grazing in the specific prairies identified.
- Temporary range improvements may be utilized to control livestock distribution and desired intensity of use.
- Invasive weeds that may appear within prairies, such as Scotch broom, French broom (*Genista monspessulana*), or Harding grass (*Phalaris aquatica*) will be eradicated using an integrated management approach.
- Roads traversing prairies will be disked/ripped and reshaped to facilitate natural reseeding and reclamation, or may be converted to trail routes (within Flyette, Preston, and/or Faulkner prairies).

Weeds

Objective: Pursuant to Executive Order 13112, preventative action will be taken to limit the opportunities for the introduction or establishment of invasive, non-native plant species within the management area.

Management Actions: The following prevention measures will be incorporated in all contracts and activities.

- Road side trees shall be maintained to the extent feasible so as to provide sufficient shade to prevent establishment of sun-loving invasive weeds.
- All heavy equipment and vehicles contracted to conduct project activities shall be inspected and cleaned of any reproductive plant parts prior to entry onto BLM public lands.
- Any fill material obtained to be imported into any project site will be inspected and determined to be invasive, non-native weed free.

- Should any invasive, non-native weeds become established on any project site(s) following soil disturbing activities, the BLM project inspector shall notify the field office invasive weed program coordinator so that immediate eradication actions can be coordinated.

Forest Management

Objectives: Use various silvicultural treatments to accelerate the development of late successional forest characteristics. The public lands within the Lacks Creek watershed are designated as a Late Successional Reserve (LSR) (USDI/USDA 1994, Northwest Forest Plan) and one of the main objectives of the Reserve is to protect and enhance late successional forest stand characteristics. Forest treatments projects using silvicultural practices, and conducted using the standards and guidelines in Northwest Forest Plan (USDI/USDA 1994), will be used to accelerate the development of late seral forest stand conditions. Silvicultural treatments are an effective means of reducing the fuel loading within a forest stand and reducing the risk of a stand replacement fire. Other objectives include maintaining the oak woodlands, grasslands and restoring the Douglas-fir vegetation component within dense hardwood (tanoak) stands. Silviculture treatments within riparian reserves will be designed in a manner, and will only be implemented, to help attain the Aquatic Conservation Strategy objectives within the Northwest Forest Plan (USDI/USDA 1994).

Management Actions:

- Silvicultural treatments that are planned include the pre-commercial and commercial thinning of previously harvested stands, hardwood stand conversion, partial removal of the conifer component within the oak woodland and meadow/grassland restoration.
- Silvicultural and restoration treatments will be implemented primarily through agreements, stewardship contracts and/or service contracts.
- If a specific project has the potential to have noise impacts on adjoining landowners, the BLM will work with the landowner(s) and the contractor to minimize impacts (e. g. limit operating hours and days etc.).

Pre-commercial thinning – 445 acres

- Conduct pre-commercial thinning in young conifer plantations where trees of no commercial value will be removed. These stands are presently overstocked with evenly spaced conifers and abundant tanoak and madrone regrowth. The diameter and height growth of the conifers are far below the growth potential of the site.
- Most stands are stocked with 300 to 500+ Douglas-fir seedlings or saplings per acre and will be reduced to 200 to 250 trees per acre.
- Thinning will be accomplished by hand crews using chainsaws.
- Conifers will be thinned to an approximate spacing of 15' X 15'.
- No trees, either conifers or hardwoods, greater than 8" will be cut.
- The largest and healthiest conifers will be selected for leave trees, as they are most able to take advantage of the additional growing space.
- Hardwoods smaller than 8" will be retained for structural diversity if insufficient hardwoods greater than 8" are present to assure species and structural diversity.

- All native brush species and snags will be left standing.
- The resulting slash will either be lopped and scattered or piled and burned to reduce the fuel loading.
- Hardwoods will not be removed in areas not stocked with conifers. This assures random spacing and assists in the development of structural diversity.

Commercial thinning – 331 acres

- Conduct commercial thinning in pole size stands that are larger than 10". These stands are usually older than 40 years and were established in the 1950's and 60's. In the more vigorous stands, some trees up to a diameter of 20" will be removed.
- Merchantable material will be removed by mechanical equipment and hauled offsite.
- Thinning will involve the removal of suppressed conifers, also called "thinning from below" where only the smaller suppressed trees are removed.
- No hardwoods will be removed to aid in the development of structural diversity and maintain the hardwood component in the stand.
- All native brush and snags will be left standing.
- The resulting slash will be either lopped and scattered or piled and burned to reduce the fuel loading.

Hardwood conversion – 340 acres

- Conduct hardwood conversion treatments involving the conversion of nearly pure hardwood stands back to the more natural forest composition of a dominant conifer stand with a hardwood component. These hardwood stands, mostly tanoak and madrone, developed following the logging practices of the 1950's and 60's. The stands were either clear cut or "high graded" with no follow-up silvicultural treatments. As a result the stands have developed into almost pure dense hardwood stands with a very small conifer component.
- Create numerous large openings with the removal of the dense tanoak component Douglas-fir seedlings will be planted in openings to develop a more naturally diverse forest stand.
- No mature hardwoods or any conifers will be removed with this treatment. Only young hardwoods that became established after logging will be removed.
- The cut hardwoods will be sold to the general public or sold to a contractor. Selling the hardwoods will help in recovering some of the cost of the treatment, reduce the fuel loading and provide a useful product to the local community.
- The resulting slash will be piled and burned or lopped and scattered.
- Douglas-fir seedlings will be planted after the hardwoods have been removed and the slash piles have been burned.

Oak woodland restoration – 253 acres

- Implement oak woodland restoration treatments involving the removal of young Douglas-fir trees that have encroached into the white and black oak vegetation series. These oak habitats were historically maintained by a fire regime (Regime Class 1 as described in Appendix B-2) and are now being encroached upon by

Douglas-fir. Without the mechanical removal of the conifers or the re-introduction of fire, this vegetation series will decrease in area, and in time, may be lost.

Special Forest Products

Objectives: Provide special forest products to the public for both personal and commercial usage. Special forest products include fuel wood, mushrooms, and other vegetative products (beargrass, huckleberry, salal, etc.). The BLM will provide these forest products at levels that do not compromise their sustainability or associated ecosystem processes.

Management Actions:

- Issue commercial or personal use permits.
- When necessary, additional (beyond standard) stipulations will be identified on special forest product permits for resource protection.
- Fuel wood permits will be issued on a case-by-case basis following winter storms to assist in clearing roads and related to forest restoration or fuel reduction projects.
- A seasonal restriction for commercial mushroom collection will be established.
- No seasonal restrictions will be placed on personal mushroom permits, although these permits may be restricted as to the amount, location and length of collection.
- All mushroom collection permits will be monitored to document resource damage.

Recreation and Transportation Management

Note: Map 3-2 (Recreation and Transportation) has been updated from the map contained in the Preliminary Management Plan. The update is provided as Attachment 2.

Objectives: Provide appropriate recreation opportunities, experiences, and benefits for visitors. Anticipated activities include vehicle touring, hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding, hunting, sightseeing, bird watching, and overnight camping. Some opportunities to be provided for user groups include:

- *Mountain bikers:* Offer safe, challenging trail riding conditions that allow visitors to develop skills and abilities, and pursue family and group riding opportunities.
- *Equestrians:* Provide new areas to explore, offer easy to moderately difficult riding opportunities in a natural setting, offer improved access to remote areas, promote opportunities to visit areas with groups or family.
- *Motorized Vehicle Users:* Offer access to scenic remote areas along unpaved routes. Provide new areas to explore with friends and family.
- *Hunters:* Provide new areas to scout and hunt, to develop or test skills and abilities in a setting that requires self-reliance and competence.

Note: The above recreation benefit statements are listed to give plan readers a general understanding of the settings and management that BLM will provide within the planning area, and are not intended to encompass all of the types of experiences that recreation visitors pursue when they access public lands.

The public lands in the Lacks Creek Management Area offer a variety of environmental settings where many of these “quality of life” benefits can be obtained. More specific management-oriented objectives are:

- Maintain and improve appropriate road and trail access.
- Ensure a quality visitor experience and enjoyment of natural and cultural resources through enhanced signing, interpretation, education, and information.
- Ensure the public health, safety, protection, and security of visitors by providing well maintained and accessible facilities and an enforcement presence. Facility developments will be rustic in appearance, blending in with the natural environment to the maximum extent practicable. Facilities located on the west side of Lacks Creek are intended to provide visitors with a semi-primitive or primitive recreation experience. Facilities on the east side of Lacks Creek are intended to provide visitors with slightly more developed or “roaded natural” recreation experience. Proposed facility developments will be phased in over time, based on visitor need and demand, and increased rate of recreation use.
- Minimize user conflicts through facility design and spatial separation of user types.
- Ensure that natural and cultural resource values are protected from visitor impacts by establishing use regulations, educating visitors regarding resource values and proper use, and monitoring.

Management Actions:

Road and Trail Access

1. Road Improvements

- Maintain and/or improve approximately 13 miles of existing roads on the west side of Lacks Creek for administrative uses, 9.0 miles which would be used as trails. Roads will be open for mountain biking, hiking, and horseback riding.
- Maintain Pine Ridge Road and spurs as needed to provide access by 2WD vehicles. Install new waterbars, culverts, and ditches where needed.
- Improve Lacks Creek Road to provide access by 2WD vehicles. Widen the road width to allow access for small horse trailers, construct turnouts, gravel where necessary, and install vehicle barriers where the road intersects with abandoned access routes. A short section of new road construction may be needed near the hiker/biker trailhead to avoid disturbing a small drainage.
- Maintain Midslope Road for 4WD vehicle use to the first large washout approximately three miles from its intersection with Pine Ridge Road. Brushing, ditching, waterbarring, and culvert cleaning will occur as needed to maintain safe travel conditions. Replace culverts as necessary to provide proper drainage and reduce the potential for soil erosion and sediment transport into streams.
- Monitor the condition of and the amount of vehicle traffic on Bair Road (county road).

- Coordinate with Humboldt County Public Works Department on repair and maintenance requirements and develop a Cooperative Maintenance Agreement for Bair Road, if necessary.
- Develop a borrow pit in a location that will not impact watershed values to obtain up to 15,000 cubic yards of rock (over the life of the plan) for use as road and trail base within the management area (see Map 3-2 for location). Additional small borrow locations (up to 10 cubic yards per incident) may be established at other ridgetop sites (away from water courses) for emergency road repairs.

2. Trail Improvements on west side of Lacks Creek

- Use heavy mechanical equipment, decommission approximately 7.5 miles of unneeded roads and convert them to multi-purpose trails, accommodating hikers, bikers, and equestrians
- Use hand labor to convert approximately 1.0 miles of unneeded roads to multi-purpose trails, accommodating hikers, bikers, and equestrians
- Construct approximately 1.5 miles of new multi-purpose trail that will either connect converted logging roads or lead to prominent visual attractions such as waterfalls.
- Construct up to 10.0 miles of mountain biking trail separate from other use trails to provide a high quality riding experience and to avoid user conflicts (specific locations for these trails have not been determined, therefore, a separate environmental analyses will need to be completed prior to construction).
- Proposed and future trails will be located so that they avoid private land trespass (i.e. lead people to private land boundaries etc.).
- Trails will be located and designed to minimize watershed impacts as described in Appendix A-4.

3. Trail improvements on east side of Lacks Creek

- Construct approximately 2.0 miles of new hiking trail through Sidehill Prairie that will connect Pine Ridge to the trail network west of Lacks Creek.
- Construct approximately 0.25 miles of new hiking trail and convert nearly 0.25 miles of unmaintained logging road from the end of Midslope Road (washout site four miles from beginning of road) that will connect to the new trail on Sidehill Prairie.
- Construct approximately 1.0 miles of new hiking/equestrian trail from Pine Ridge Prairie to Midslope Road.
- Construct approximately 0.25 miles of new multi-purpose trail from the proposed trailhead at the end of Lacks Creek Road to the proposed trail network on the west side of Lacks Creek.

Information/Interpretation/Education

- Develop an overall visitor orientation brochure for the area, as well as recreation-activity specific brochures.
- Provide web-based information materials including updates on trail conditions, fire restrictions, etc.

- Incorporate use ethics messages into all visitor information and interpretive materials including -- inform all visitors about the remote nature of the area, the presence of adjoining private lands, and the extreme summer fire danger.
- Clearly sign public land boundaries.
- Incorporate information on the significant natural and cultural resource values of the area into interpretive materials.
- Although trespass issues are not expected, BLM law enforcement rangers and other staff will work with adjoining landowners to correct issues if they develop in a specific area. Visitors will be informed that roads crossing private lands west of Lacks Creek are not open to public access. The only public access point is from Pine Ridge Road (Off of Bair County Road).

Facility Development

- Develop a trailhead parking/camping area that will hold up to five passenger vehicles and five horse trailers near to or at the end of the Lacks Creek Road. Facilities will be designed and located to provide maximum separation of horses from both hikers and bikers. A restroom, vehicle barriers, corrals, signs, picnic tables, fire rings, and a kiosk will be installed. Approximately ¼ mile above this facility, develop a day use parking area to hold up to five passenger vehicles (trailer parking will not be accommodated at this location).
- Develop a trailhead parking area that could hold up to five vehicles at the 3.0 mile mark of the Midslope Road where vehicle barriers, fire rings, and a kiosk will be installed.
- Develop an equestrian staging and camping area on Pine Ridge Road. This site will be widened and leveled to accommodate five horse trailers at any one time. A kiosk, fire ring, group picnic table, water tank for horse use only, and corrals will be installed.
- Develop two small trailhead parking areas along Pine Ridge Road: one adjacent to Pine Ridge Prairie and the other adjacent to Sidehill Prairie. Each site will hold up to three vehicles. Ground leveling, road turnout construction, vehicle barriers, fire rings, and a kiosk will be installed at each site.
- Develop five small vehicle pull-in campsites along Pine Ridge Road and Spurs, and one vehicle pull-in campsite on Midslope Road. Each site will hold up to three vehicles. Vegetation will be cleared, and vehicle barriers and fire rings will be installed at each site.
- Designate up to 15 primitive campsites for use on a first-come, first-serve basis. Most of these sites are located on old landings that are sparsely vegetated. Each site will be maintained free of vegetation with a diameter of approximately 50 to 100 feet, and include fire rings and appropriate signing. Water sources nearby some of these sites may be improved slightly by building small rock impoundments so equestrians can carry water in buckets from the streams to the campsite, or by installing short lengths of water line with a spigot at the end. Primitive campsites, including those determined by a preliminary survey to be suitable for equestrian use, are identified on Map 3-2. Additional primitive sites may be made available for equestrian use if space criteria and management objectives are met and water is available nearby.

- In general, visitors will be educated about the importance of packing out trash to prevent corvid and other predator populations from increasing. If trash collection is provided, bear and other predator-proof cans will be used.

Regulations and Monitoring

The following rules and regulations will be published in the Federal Register as “Supplementary Rules” pursuant Section 8365.1-6.

- Overnight camping will be allowed at designated sites only.
- Mountain bike and equestrian use will be allowed on designated roads and trails only.
- Campfires are allowed in BLM-provided fire-rings in designated sites only. During wildfire season, campfires will be subject to seasonal restrictions through the process outlined in the Arcata Field Office Fire Restriction and Emergency Closure Plan.
- Use of power equipment such as generators and chainsaws will be restricted to Vehicle Campsites and Trailheads only, and subject to seasonal wildlife closures (February 1-July 31). Chainsaws could be used outside of these locations for firewood cutting with a valid BLM permit.
- Firearms and archery use will be allowed throughout the area.
- Public use of motorized vehicles by vehicle type will be allowed on designated roads which include Pine Ridge Road and spurs, Midslope Road, and Lacks Creek Road.
- Where otherwise noted above the remaining public lands will be closed to motorized vehicle use, except for administrative and emergency uses.
- Firewood cutting and collection will be allowed by permit only.

Refer to Appendix A-4 for “standard operating procedures” that will be employed when implementing approved recreation management actions.

Visual Resources Management

Objectives: Manage the quality of the visual environment by maintaining Visual Resource Management (VRM) Classes 2 and 3 as described below:

Class 2: Areas to be managed under Management Class 2 are the old-growth ACEC, prairies, and oak woodlands. The objective of this class is to retain the landscape’s existing character. Management activities and uses can be seen, but should not attract the attention of the casual observer. Any changes must repeat the basic elements of form, line, color, and texture in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape.

Class 3: The remainder of the management area will be managed under Management Class 3. The objective of this class is to partially retain the landscape’s existing character. The level of change can be moderate. Management activities and uses may attract attention, but should not dominate the view of the casual observer.

Management Actions:

- When projects or actions are proposed, a visual contrast rating will be conducted, if necessary, to ensure that they are designed and located to meet the area's VRM objectives.
- Existing roads, culverts and other features will be inventoried for visual impacts and mitigating measures employed to reduce contrasts.

Fire Management

Objectives: Reduce the threat from wildfire to human life and property and to natural and cultural resources. Minimize impacts associated with large, high intensity wildfires, fire suppression activities and the public associated with prescribed fire activities. Enhance wildlife habitat, forest values, and native species diversity.

Management Actions:

- A full suppression policy will be implemented with a target of controlling at least 95 percent of all unwanted fires during initial attack, in accordance with current BLM fire management policies.
- Due to the area's size, topography, and vicinity to private property, the Lacks Creek management area is not conducive to managing for Wildland Fire Use (allowing naturally occurring fires to burn within prescription to meet resources management objectives).
- Suppression actions on all wildfires within the Lacks Creek will use minimum impact suppression tactics (MIST). In so doing, the principle of fighting fire aggressively but providing for safety first will not be compromised.

Refer to Appendix A-5 for Standard Operating Procedures when implementing approved fire management actions.

Restrictions on heavy equipment (See Map 3-3 for spatial representation of restrictions identified below)

- Dozers and tracked equipment may create fireline on slopes under 20 percent, and along Pine, Beaver, and Dunn Ridges.
- Dozers and tracked equipment are restricted on slopes between 20-45 percent unless there is an immediate threat to life and property. Current or forecasted weather and National Fire Danger Rating System (NFDRS) indices shall be factored into the decision to use dozers and tracked equipment for fire suppression efforts on these slopes. The incident commander may elect to use these types of equipment if any combination of three of the following factors exist or are forecasted:
 1. 20 foot winds greater than 6 miles per hour.
 2. Temperature greater than 86 degrees.
 3. Relative humidity less than 29 percent.
 4. Energy Release Component (ERC) greater than 49.
 5. Burning Index (BI) greater than 44.

- Dozers and tracked equipment are entirely restricted on slopes exceeding 45 percent.

Provided the above slope restrictions are met, fireline may be created on decommissioned roads, but no decommissioned roads shall be re-opened or improved for equipment travel.

Prescribed Fire

- Prescribed fire will be used to support resource management goals related to vegetation, forest management, terrestrial and aquatic wildlife, and recreation. As a tool, prescribed fire may be used in conjunction with other methods (hand removal, heavy equipment, etc.) in order to achieve the most efficient method of reaching these goals. This will include pile burning slash residues resulting from forest management activities and re-introduction of fire into prairies, oak woodlands, and forests through low-intensity broadcast burning.
- Prescribed fire will be based on sound risk management, taking into account economic feasibility, the best science available, cooperation with other agencies and tribes, and consideration for public health and environmental quality. Not all the land within the Lacks Creek Management Area is expected to be burned, as risk management, logistics, and resource values may make prescribed fire untenable.
- Specific burn units and acreages shall be determined after thorough analysis of fuel loads, seral stages, and affected resources.
- Prescribed fire plans will be prepared for individual burns that will provide burn objectives, prescriptions, and contingency plans in case the prescription is exceeded or suppression action is needed.
- Burning will only occur with authorization from the North Coast Unified Air Quality Management District.
- Given the discontinuous nature of forest seral stages in the Lacks Creek Management Area, broadcast burns within forests will be small in size. Prescribed burns are not expected to exceed 400 acres, and most will be less than 100 acres. No more than 400 acres will be ignited by prescribed fire in any year in order to maintain a mosaic of seral stages within the management area.

